

Claims

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A system for identifying a license for a first software product of a first type installed on a computer system, the computer system also having at least one other software product of the first type installed on the computer system comprising:
 - a first license associated with the first software product installed on the computer;
 - 5 at least one second license associated with the at least one other software product installed on the computer; and
 - a license module that compares the first license and the at least one second license and selects one of the first and second licenses based on predetermined criteria.
- 10 2. The system of claim 1, wherein the license module comprises:
 - a graphical user interface module that receives user requests to display a license for the first software product.
- 15 3. The system of claim 1, wherein the license module comprises:
 - a searching module that searches the computer system and identifies installed software products of the first type.
- 20 4. The system of claim 3, wherein the searching module comprises:
 - a searching module that searches configuration data of installed software products on the computer system and identifies installed software products of the first type as indicated by a product identifier contained in a first configuration data for the first software product.
- 25 5. The system of claim 1, wherein the license module comprises:
 - an identification module that determines the first type of the software product.
- 30 6. The system of claim 5, wherein the identification module comprises:
 - an identification module that determines the first type of the software product by retrieving a product identifier from configuration data for the first software product.

7. The system of claim 1, wherein the license module comprises:
a comparing module that identifies the at least one second licenses for each of the
at least one other software products of the first type.
- 5 8. The system of claim 7, wherein the comparing module comprises:
a comparing module that selects one of the first and second licenses based on an
assigned rank associated with each license.
9. The system of claim 8, wherein the assigned rank associated with each license is
10 provided with each license.
10. The system of claim 8, wherein the assigned rank associated with each license is
stored in an unencoded form.
- 15 11. The system of claim 8, wherein the assigned rank associated with each license is
determined by a developer of the software products based on predetermined criteria.
12. The system of claim 1, wherein the licenses are stored in a protected form and the
license module comprises:
20 a generation module that creates a displayable form of the selected one of the first
and second licenses for display to a user.
13. The system of claim 12, wherein the licenses are stored in an encoded form and the
generation module comprises:
25 a generation module that decodes the encoded form of the selected one of the first
and second licenses.
14. The system of claim 12, wherein the licenses are stored in a generic form and the
generation module comprises:
30 a generation module that obtains branding text for the first software product and
displays the branding text with the displayable form of the selected one of
the first and second licenses.

15. A method for identifying a license associated with a first software product, the first software product being one of a plurality of software products of a first type installed on a computer system, the method comprising:

- 5 identifying a first type of the first software product;
 comparing the licenses for each of the software products of the first type installed
 on the computer system; and
 selecting a first license from the licenses based on predetermined ranking criteria.

- 10 16. The method of claim 15, wherein comparing comprises:
 searching for installed software product of the first type installed on the computer
 system.

17. The method of claim 16, wherein comparing comprises:
15 identifying the licenses of the software products of the first type installed on the
 computer system.

18. The method of claim 17, wherein comparing comprises:
 obtaining, from each license, a pre-determined license rank for the license.

- 20 19. The method of claim 18, wherein selecting comprises:
 selecting the license with the highest license rank.

20. The method of claim 15, wherein comparing comprises:
25 displaying the license for the installed software product of the first type with the
 highest license rank.

21. The method of claim 15, wherein identifying comprises:
 identifying a group ID that identifies the first software product.

- 30 22. The method of claim 21, wherein comparing comprises:
 searching for software products installed on the computer system with the same
 group ID.

23. The method of claim 20, wherein the displaying comprises:

including with the displayed license information indicating that the displayed
license is associated with the first software product.

5 24. The method of claim 23, wherein including comprises:

identifying branding text from a branding table associated with the first software
product; and
displaying the branding text with the license.

10 25. The method of claim 24, wherein the branding text identifies the first software
product by name and version.

26. The method of claim 15, wherein each license is divided into different terms and the
method further comprising:

15 comparing the licenses term by term;
selecting, from each comparison, the best term from the licenses; and
constructing a composite license having the best terms.

27. The method of claim 15 further comprising:

20 receiving a user command to display the license associated with the first software
product.

28. The method of claim 15, wherein the first type is determined by a group ID and
channel ID and identifying comprises:

25 retrieving the group ID and channel ID for the first software product.

29. The method of claim 28, wherein the group ID and channel ID are retrieved from
configuration data for the first software product.

30 30. The method of claim 28, wherein the group ID and channel ID are retrieved from a
license file installed with the first software product.

31. The method of claim 28, wherein comparing comprises:

identifying installed software products with the same group ID as the retrieved group ID.

32. The method of claim 29, wherein the configuration data resides in registry entries in a
5 registry maintained by the computer systems and comparing comprises:
searching the registry for registry entries having the same group ID and channel
ID.

33. A system for identifying a license for a first software product of a first type installed on a computer system, the computer system also having at least one other software product of the first type installed on the computer system comprising:

a first license associated with the first software product installed on the computer;
at least one second license associated with the at least one other software product
installed on the computer; and

wherein each software product of the first type includes a license module that
compares the first license and the at least one second license and selects
one of the first and second licenses based on predetermined criteria.

34. The system of claim 33, wherein the license module in each software product
comprises:

a graphical user interface module that receives user requests to display and print a
license for the first software product.

35. The system of claim 33, wherein the license module in each software product
comprises:

a searching module that searches the computer system and identifies installed
software products of the first type.

36. The system of claim 35, wherein the searching module comprises:

a searching module that searches configuration data of installed software products
on the computer system and identifies installed software products of the
first type as indicated by a product identifier contained in first
configuration data for the first software product.

37. The system of claim 33, wherein the license module in each software product
comprises:

an identification module that includes a product identifier that identifies the first
type of the software product.

38. The system of claim 37, wherein the product identifier is stored in a registry entry for
the first software product.

39. The system of claim 33, wherein the license module in each software product comprises:

a comparing module that identifies the at least one second licenses for each of the at least one other software products of the first type.

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40. The system of claim 39, wherein the comparing module comprises:

a comparing module that selects one of the first and second licenses based on an assigned rank associated with each license.

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41. The system of claim 40, wherein the assigned rank associated with each license is provided with each license.

42. The system of claim 40, wherein the assigned rank associated with each license is stored in an unencoded form.

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43. The system of claim 40, wherein the assigned rank associated with each license is determined by a developer of the software products based on predetermined criteria.

44. The system of claim 33, wherein the licenses are stored in a protected form and the license module in each software product comprises:

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a generation module that creates a displayable form of the selected one of the first and second licenses for display to a user.

45. The system of claim 44, wherein the licenses are stored in an encoded form and the generation module comprises:

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a generation module that decodes the encoded form of the selected one of the first and second licenses.

46. The system of claim 44, wherein the licenses are stored in a generic form and the generation module comprises:

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a generation module that obtains branding text for the first software product and displays it with the displayable form of the selected one of the first and second licenses.

47. A method of displaying a license for a software product installed on a computer system comprising:

storing the license for the software product in a protected form on the computer system, the license associated with the software product;

5 receiving, by the software product, a request to display the license of the software product;

generating, by the software product, a displayable form of the license from the protected form; and

displaying the displayable form of the license.

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48. The method of claim 47, wherein the displayable form of the license can only be generated by a software product that is associated with the license.

49. The method of claim 47, wherein the protected form of the license is an encoded form and generating further comprises:

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decoding the protected form to obtain a displayable form of the license.

50. The method of claim 49, wherein the protected form of the license is a base-64 encoded form.

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51. The method of claim 47, wherein software product includes a license module and the receiving, generating and displaying operations are performed by the license module.

52. The method of claim 47, wherein the license is a generic license and generating comprises:

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displaying text with the displayable form of the license identifying the software product.

53. The method of claim 52, wherein displaying further comprises:

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retrieving branding text for the software product from a branding table; and displaying the branding text with the license.

54. The method of claim 47, wherein the license is stored in a registry entry for the software product.

55. The method of claim 47, wherein the license is stored with the branding table in a file associated with the software product.

56. A method for licensing software products to be installed on computer systems comprising:

5 associating each software product with one of a plurality of licenses;
assigning a rank to each of the plurality of licenses for use when comparing
licenses; and
providing each software product with its associated license and an indication of
the assigned rank of its associated license.

57. The method of claim 56 further comprising:

10 dividing each of the plurality of licenses into a plurality of terms;
assigning a rank to each term of each license;

58. The method of claim 56, wherein the assigning comprises:

15 evaluating the relative scope of rights conveyed by each license based on
predetermined criteria; and
assigning a rank based on the relative scope of rights conveyed.

59. The method of claim 58, wherein the criteria include the temporal term of the license.

20 60. The method of claim 58, wherein the criteria include the allowed number of
computers upon which the software product may be installed under the license.

61. The method of claim 56 further comprising:

25 storing the indication of the rank with each license.

62. The method of claim 56 further comprising:

storing, upon installation of the software product on a computer system, the
software product, its associated license and the rank of the associated
license upon the computer system.

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63. The method of claim 56 further comprising:

comparing, prior to displaying a license for the software product, the indication of
rank of the associated license with the indications of rank of other licenses.

64. The method of claim 56, wherein each license is a generic license and further comprising:

5 providing each software product with associated branding text, the branding text for display with displayed licenses to expressly identify the displayed license with the software product.

65. The method of claim 64, wherein each user interface for displaying a generic license includes at least one field to insert branding text.

66. A method for identifying and displaying a license for a first software product of a first type installed on a computer system comprising:

storing a first license for the first software product and second licenses for other software products in a protected form on the computer system;
5 receiving a request to display the license of the software product;
identifying the first type of the first software product;
searching the computer system for other software products of the first type;
comparing the first license and second licenses for the other software products of the first type found in the searching;
10 selecting one of the first and second licenses based on predetermined ranking criteria;
generating a displayable form of the selected one of the licenses from the protected form; and
displaying the displayable form of the license.

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67. The method of claim 66, wherein comparing comprises:

obtaining, from each license, a pre-determined license rank for the license.

68. The method of claim 67, wherein selecting comprises:

20 selecting the license with the highest license rank.

69. The method of claim 66, wherein identifying comprises:

retrieving a product identifier from configuration data for the first software product.

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70. The method of claim 69, wherein the product key includes a group ID and a channel ID.

71. The method of claim 69, wherein searching comprises:

30 searching configuration data for other software products that have the same product identifier.

72. The method of claim 66, wherein the displaying comprises:

displaying with the displayable form of the selected one of the licenses
information indicating that the displayed license is associated with the first
software product.

5 73. The method of claim 72, wherein displaying comprises:
 identifying branding text from a branding table associated with the first software
 product; and
 displaying the branding text with the displayable form of the selected one of the
 licenses.

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 74. The method of claim 73, wherein the branding text identifies the software product by
name and version.

 75. The method of claim 66, wherein each license is divided into different terms and the
15 method further comprising:

 comparing the licenses term by term;
 selecting, from each comparison, the best term from the licenses; and
 constructing a composite license having the best terms.

20 76. The method of claim 66 further comprising:
 receiving a user command to display a license for the first software product.

77. A computer program product readable by a computing system and encoding a computer program of instructions for executing a computer process for identifying and displaying a license for a first software product of a first type installed on the computer system, said computer process comprising:

5 storing a first license for the first software product and second licenses for other
 software products in a protected form on the computer system;
 receiving a request to display the license of the software product;
 identifying the first type of the first software product;
 searching the computer system for other software products of the first type;
10 comparing the first license and second licenses for the other software products of
 the first type found in the searching;
 selecting one of the first and second licenses based on predetermined ranking
 criteria;
 generating a displayable form of the selected one of the licenses from the protected
15 form; and
 displaying the displayable form of the license.

78. The computer program product of claim 77, wherein the computer process further comprises:

20 obtaining, from each license, a pre-determined license rank for the license.

79. The computer program product of claim 77, wherein comparing comprises:
 obtaining, from each license, a pre-determined license rank for the license.

25 80. The computer program product of claim 78, wherein selecting comprises:
 selecting the license with the highest license rank.

81. The computer program product of claim 77, wherein identifying comprises:
 retrieving a product identifier from configuration data for the first software
30 product.

82. The computer program product of claim 81, wherein the product key includes a group ID and a channel ID.

83. The computer program product of claim 81, wherein searching comprises:
searching configuration data for other software products that have the same
product identifier.
- 5 84. The computer program product of claim 77, wherein the displaying comprises:
displaying with the displayable form of the selected on of the licenses information
indicating that the displayed license is associated with the first software
product.
- 10 85. The computer program product of claim 84, wherein displaying comprises:
identifying branding text from a branding table associated with the first software
product; and
displaying the branding text with the displayable form of the selected one of the
licenses.
- 15 86. The computer program product of claim 85, wherein the branding text identifies the
software product by name and version.
- 20 87. The computer program product of claim 77, wherein each license is divided into
different terms and further comprising:
comparing the licenses term by term;
selecting, from each comparison, the best term from the licenses; and
constructing a composite license having the best terms.
- 25 88. The computer program product of claim 77 further comprising:
receiving a user command to display a license for the first software product.